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ABSTRACT

Training represents a significant portion of the adult education market, yet many believe the principles of training are not aligned with principles of adult education. A literature review supports the inclusion of training within the adult education field by comparing their respective philosophies and aims, their assumptions about adult learners and the learning process, and the role that teachers play in each. It concludes that the level of success of any adult learning experience is contingent on a collaboration of learner, facilitator, and methods. Organized adult learning activities that adhere to andragogical principles must be considered adult education even if those activities are termed "training." It may be time for adult education professionals to abandon the line of demarcation between training and adult education and focus instead on combining the strengths of both to create a new definition of adult education. (Contains 17 references.) (KC)

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Principles of Training and of Adult Education: A Comparison

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Abstract

Training represents a significant portion of the adult education market yet many believe the principles of training are not aligned with principles of adult education. This paper confirms the inclusion of training within the adult education field by comparing their respective philosophies and aims, their assumptions about adult learners and the learning process, and the role that the teacher plays in each. In addition, similarities in the program development process are presented as well as a commentary on the future direction of training within the adult education profession.

Principles of Training and of Adult Education: A Comparison

Introduction

Issues surrounding the term "training" have been controversial since the early years of adult education. The writings of early and contemporary adult educators such as Everette Dean Martin, Myles Horton, and K.H. Lawson, seem to reject training as genuine adult education. Instead, liberal education, social change, and intellectual growth are professed to be the primary aims of adult education while the more practical nature of training is seen as too capitalistic and pragmatic to warrant inclusion in the field of adult education.

Regardless of the ideals professed by some leaders in the field, training represents the vast majority of learning activities participated in by adults. It is the bread and butter of adult education. In fact, as of 1991, $210 billion was spent annually on workplace training (Carnevale, Gainer, & Villet, 1990). For this reason as well as those to follow, this position paper provides evidence to support the inclusion of training principles within the broader principles of adult education.

Interpretation of Training

In likening the underlying aims, concepts, and principles of training to the field of adult education, it is important to explain what the terms training and adult education mean. The term "training" incites emotion, or at least, opinion, in those who call themselves adult educators. Nadler (1993) describes training as short-term learning experiences intended to improve a person's performance in his or her present job. This definition narrowly focuses on the learner's current job. While it is true that some jobs many have specific elements for which training is not transferrable to other jobs, the vast majority of jobs are composed of tasks for which learning is transferrable. For example, training which focuses on improving skills in the use of a job-specific computer system is

likely to improve the learner's general knowledge of computers thereby negating the specificity of the training implied in Nadler's definition. A better definition would envelop the skills, attitudes, and values possessed by learners with respect to the organization's goals. Therefore, this paper will define training as "... planned and organized learning which usually takes place in an occupational or vocational setting, is geared toward skill acquisition for a job, and is perceived as valuable to an employer." (J. Rachal, personal communication, June 4, 1997).

The term "adult education" is also ambiguous within the field of adult education and is defined as: "activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults." (Mirriam & Brockett, 1997, p. 8).

It is difficult to fully compare the principles of training to the principles of adult education because the adult education profession has not yet established a formal set of common, guiding principles. However, in reviewing the current literature, common themes appear which may serve as a substitute for formal principles of adult education. These themes relate to philosophies and aims of adult education, typologies, attitude toward learning, assumptions about the learner, the role of the teacher, and the nature of the adult learning process. These themes will serve as anchors on which to base comparisons between the nature of training and the nature of adult education.

Philosophy and Aims

One method of assessing the principles of adult education through a review of the typologies. Typologies, including content/purpose typologies, provide a helpful framework for the study of adult education practices. Nearly every typology includes a category for work-related (training) education (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). By attributing an entire typology category to training, adult education professionals endorse its inclusion under the adult education umbrella.

Typologies help organize and provide structure to adult education. Philosophies of adult education also provide structure by supplying a framework of values and principles. The purpose and philosophies of adult education and training overlap significantly. For example, Mirriam and Brockett (1997) claim that one enduring purpose of adult education is in preparing for enhancing one's work life. Certainly, training serves to enhance the work lives of employees and this also justifies the inclusion of training within the realm of adult education.

The pervasiveness of training within adult education has meant a greater, more disciplined grounding in philosophies of adult education. Thomas Fisher (1997) comments on the perceptiveness of trainers regarding the value of teaching philosophy. He states

> "Trainers with large companies in business and industry seem to do a better job at recognizing differences between pedagogical and andragogical learning because their incentive to do so is different -- profit. The company's bottom line depends on a well trained work force, thus the trainers do what works best." (Para. 21).

Critics might condemn economic nature of this motivation. However, the realities of workforce training result in the appropriate application of teaching methods for the adult audience. Unlike some adult education forums in which politics, personalities, and motivations can detract from a learner-centered approach, organizational training, with its eye on the bottom line, affords few opportunities for distractions. Such outcome-based training provides a measure of accountability for the organization and the trainer, and subsequently benefits the learner. This pragmatic, yet andragogical, approach to training not only respects the trainer and learner, but also stresses real-world situations, and the importance of context and experience. The trainer is progressive, and open to new ideas (Miller, 1994).

Because training professionals are more solidly grounded in the practical aspects of adult education than are other adult educators, they are often more successful teachers of adults. Miller (1994) believes that trainers have been successful in terms of practice and keeping current and relevant, by using principles of pragmatism as a frame-of-reference and basis for workplace education.

Critics of including training as part of adult education point to the behavioristic model as being pedagogical in nature, and not applicable to adult education. This notion assumes that all training is imbedded in behaviorism; however, training is not always "doing" (task and skills-oriented) and education is not always "understanding" (conceptual focus). In reality, business and skills training programs are compelled to present larger issues and emphasize the development of higher level thinking skills. In fact, formal adult education is moving away from standard classroom-style instruction and is incorporating experiential, practical, hands-on, functional "training." (T. Krutt, personal communication, Jan. 31, 1997).

Indeed, workplace change caused by political, economic, and social forces have caused trainers to move away from behaviorism (Pace, Smith, & Mills, 1991) and adopt new methods that utilize or are driven by philosophic foundations like pragmatism, existentialism, and radicalism. Likewise, according to Elias and Merriam (1980), progressive, humanistic, and radical philosophies also heavily influence adult education practices. In addition, Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals continue to draw from these philosophies of adult education when designing and implementing adult education programs such as diversity education (Strom, 1996).

The philosophical foundations of adult education and training overlap and are merging. This common basis is represented in shared objectives such as effective instruction, and being able to

reach populations outside the traditional K-12 and higher education system (Leith, 1996). Both adult educators and work force trainers have common functions, objectives, and have a shared fundamental educational commitment to helping individuals reach their full potential. These virtuous, common goals imply a close philosophical alignment between training and adult education.

An interesting notion held by many adult educators is the idea that education is value-neutral while training is value-laden. This notion serves to unfairly separate adult education and workplace training. Price, a member of the adult education network, argues that,

> "Adult education is indeed, value laden and adult educators mold minds and values into shapes acceptable to the educator. Not even critical theory practices are politically or morally neutral. I suspect that trainers who deal primarily with the instrumental aspects of knowledge are much more respectful of the individual personalities of their learners than the Friere wannabes who attempt to transform their learners into philosophic and political clones of themselves." (personal communication, Feb. 4, 1997).

One can argue that neither training nor education is value-neutral. Regardless of the pursuit of organizational effectiveness, much of training supports both personal and social improvement. Training programs are not without socially redeeming qualities. They provide the employee with the tools he needs to advance in the workplace and in the world around him such as personal enrichment courses; literacy courses, English as a second language, personal finance, and stress management -- most at no cost for the employee.

Training provides opportunities for personal enrichment but, more importantly, provides learners with viable, life enhancing skills. Because learning is the rationing hand that distributes earnings in the American economy, people with the most education and access to learning on the job

are doing best. Those with the least education and least access to learning on the job are doing worst (Carnevale, 1991).

Assumptions about Learning

The philosophies espoused by adult education and training are the same and are directed toward enriching learner's lives. Accordingly, principles of training and principles of adult education have similar assumptions about adult learning. Training practices employ many of the ideas espoused within the primary adult learning theory of andragogy.

Learning must be lifelong (Knowles, 1990). Training is a continual process, marked by periods of formal learning between periods of practical application. The idea of training as lifelong learning is not new. As early as 1931, Alfred Whitehead pointed out that training must prepare us for our future; that education must be a life long process of continual inquiry (Whitehead, 1931). Business and industry, processes, and job requirements are constantly changing. Employers must keep up with change by maintaining a productive, competent workforce. In addition, employees are responsible for maintaining their marketable skills through continuing education and training. For both the employer and employee, learning is "K-80" and not "K-12," (Goad, 1996)

Similar to training as lifelong learning is the idea that learning in adult education is active and the initiative resides in the learner (Knowles, 1990). Here, too, training supports adult education principles because training is both experiential and voluntary in nature. Adults as workers and as learners bring diverse experiences to the learning process -- experiences that serve as filter for interpreting new information. This filtering process is the same whether the learning occurs through employer sponsored training or through education. In fact, a learner's experience may be more pragmatic in a training situation than in formal adult education; the very nature of training relies

heavily on the learner's experiential filtering. For this reason, trainers use techniques such as field experience and problem solving that take advantage of the learner's rich experience base. Other teaching techniques common to training and adult education programs are group discussion, simulation, problem solving, case studies and lab exercises (Fisher, 1997).

Knowles (1990) maintains that a purpose of adult education is to facilitate the development of the competencies required for performance in life situations. In this case, training is adult education because training supports work - a fundamental "life situation." Whatever the title or term - work, job, career, or just "earning a living," training is meant to develop or enhance life skills. One AEDNET (Adult Education Network) participant expressed this very eloquently, "Any skill that we learn (tying our shoes, changing oil, math, alphabet, etc.) are threads with which we weave. The crossings, interconnections, and interleaving of the threads creates the cloth of our lives." (A Macpherson, personal communication, Jan. 23, 1997). What we learn, regardless of where we learn it, is part of our being. Training just happens to occur in conjunction with work.

Another key premise in adult education focuses on the perceived value and timing of learning. Adults feel they need to know only what is useful to them and will learn it when they feel it is important (Knowles, 1990). On the job training is a good example of this type of educational experience. It is usually a critical learning experience for the employee and the employee is well aware of its importance.

Closely tied to the value and timing of learning is the idea that learners want to see and be able to use the benefits of the learning experience immediately. For training, especially on the job training, the benefits of the learning are evident as the employee moves quickly from "learning" to

doing." Other adult education experiences may not provide such a rapid transition. The longer the gap between "learning" and "doing" the less meaningful the learning.

Assumptions about Learners

Training and adult education have similar philosophical orientations and assumptions about learning. A third area that favorably compares training to adult education is their common assumptions about the learner. Knowles (1990) and Brookfield (1986) hold that adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking learning and that participation in adult learning should be voluntary. Critics of "training as adult education" would argue that much of training is involuntarily imposed on employees. Although some training is certainly required for some jobs, one can argue that employees are usually well aware (or should be) of the contingencies of their jobs or careers beforehand. This argument implies that the job or career is voluntary and "you knew what you were getting into." therefore, all training is essentially voluntary.

This argument aside, many employees participate in employer sponsored training quite willingly. Training departments often hold numerous classes, workshops, and training events each year -- events that are timed to be convenient for employees. In fact, the voluntary nature of employer sponsored training is like other adult education programs. In both, learners constantly supply information about their wants and needs through attendance, or conversely, by "voting with their feet."

Knowles (1990) and Brookfield (1986) also hold that adults need to be perceived by others as capable of self-direction. HRD and learning organizations advocate the self-directedness of employees. Employees are responsible for selecting, scheduling, attending, and evaluating training

programs. They must take the lead in transferring the learning to their specific work situation in a meaningful way. Business and industry depends upon the self-directedness of employees, both inside and outside the context of training programs. Those employees who take initiative are perceived as most valuable to employers.

The ability to "learn how to learn" is closely related to the concept of self-direction for both training and adult education. When learners accomplish this, either through adult education or training, they are able to continue learning outside any formal context or organization and become true self-directed, lifelong learners (Goad, 1996).

Knowles (1990) contends that adults are internally motivated to seek out learning for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, and improved quality of life rather than to simply earn more money. Although institutional training programs are regularly sold as "learn to earn," the learners must be internally motivated to attend. In this way, training, like adult education, elevates us emotionally, as well as financially. It provides a means by which we are afforded choices in our lives. Sometimes those choices have less to do with money and more to do with freedom, flexibility, or simply happiness.

The Teachers Role

Principles of training and principles of adult education are also similar in their perception of teacher as facilitator of learning. Rather than "perform" lectures, trainers, as facilitators, are most interested in ensuring post-training learner independence. Trainers accomplish this by providing learners with information on how to learn, whom to call, or where to go after the training is complete. The trainer must focuses on skill or knowledge acquisition (content) as well as broader goals of

teaching inquiry skills, decision making, personal development, and self-evaluation of work. Trainers, and the institution or organization have a vested interest in teaching self-directedness.

Nature of the process.

The essence of training programs and other adult education programs is alike. Both have common processes such as teaching, curriculum development, assessment, and counseling (Leith, 1996). An important skill of both adult educators and trainers is the ability to plan successful programs.

In fact, training organizations often surpass adult educators in their ability to produce successful learning programs. This is because organizations may have the appropriate technology, expertise, and more importantly - funding. Training organizations also do a better job at measuring program success because success is often tied to a cost/benefit model of assessing program value. Participant reactions, post-training capability - including transfer of learning, are important to the organizations return on investment. Although evaluation is professed to be important in adult education programs, many do a poor job at evaluating and acting on results (Cafarella, 1994).

Training organizations do a very good job at assessing learner needs - another important part of the program planning process. For example, HRD departments commonly perform periodic employee surveys designed, in part, to assess learner needs. This focus on employee as "learner" and "client" makes training organizations collaborative - a key principle of effective adult education (Brookfield 1986). The training organization's spiral process of assessing learner needs, facilitating learning, evaluating learner and program results and revising learning activities are all components of effective adult education programs (Brookfield, 1986).

Future Perspective

Critics of "training as adult education" might contend that training applies techniques of behaviorism to mold the attitudes and actions of workplace learners. This just is not the case. Enter the "Learning Organization."

The global nature of our economy is forcing business and industry to be increasingly competitive. As a result, researchers and consultants believe organizations that are viable, competitive, and successful in the future are the ones that become learning organizations (Goad, 1996). A learning organization is one that facilitates the learning of all its members and continuously transforms itself (Pedler, 1991).

The learning organization has implication for both adult education and training. The principles and practices of learning organizations are very much aligned with those of adult education practitioners. Both must be continually looking at the skills needed by its practitioners, considering that they must continue to learn throughout their lifetimes (Goad, 1996). Therefore, education practitioners (whether they call themselves trainers, teachers, or adult educators) who know how to design and deliver learning - especially just-in-time learning, will be the adult education leaders of tomorrow.

The changing nature of training and adult education is causing some to question whether adult education is driving workplace education or is workplace education driving adult education? One AEDNET participant made this point when he says, "As HRD and instructional design departments, schools, and organizations flourish, adult education becomes ever more marginalized. Currently, those serving the practical basic education needs of adults are the only ones holding the adult education community together - financially or otherwise." (M. Price, personal communication,

Feb. 4, 1997). Resolving these issues will take time. Regardless, the changing nature of education in the workplace and adult education will mean increased attention to the needs, interests, and skills of adult learners.

Conclusion

The level of success of any adult learning experience is contingent on a collaboration of learner, facilitator, and methods. Organized adult learning activities that adhere to andragogical principles must be considered adult education even if those activities are termed "training." Perhaps it is time for adult education professionals to abandon the line of demarcation between training and adult education and focus, instead, on combining the strengths of both to create a new definition of adult education.

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